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THE MAKING OF A VIOLINIST

The Science of Violin Technique as applied to Art

A SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES
FOR THE USE OF TEACHERS

BY

EDITHA G. KNOCKER

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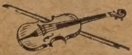

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To those two great artists,
Leopold v. Auer and Plunket Greene,
to whose inspiring example and
true friendship I owe so much,
this little book is dedicated.

PREFACE.

I have been asked to put my principles of teaching into book-form, and am doing so with mixed feelings. With pleasure, because teaching has always been a joy to me. With reluctance, because the longer I live and the more I learn, the more it is impressed upon me what a lot there is still to be discovered, how rapidly one accumulates new ideas to work out, and how few "rules" one can, or ought to, lay down as immutable. When one realises that no two people are alike, either physically or mentally, it seems absurd to imagine that any teacher can have a "method" which can be applied to all his pupils alike. It is, in fact, impossible. But as there are fundamental truths which give a stable basis to life, and act as guides in all the varied circumstances in which we find ourselves, so there are principles, both in art and its technique, which apply to all students and all instruments, irrespective of the physical idiosyncrasies of the individual. I may say here that this little book is in no way meant for beginners. I am speaking to those who have already had a certain amount of experience. So in these pages the reader will find but few laws laid down. The suggestions for practice are mostly the logical outcome of those laws which are themselves the result of the collective experience of generations of teachers and performers.

Purpose of laws

To neglect these laws is to lose valuable time; to obey them does not weaken the student's individuality. They are there to point out the surest way to acquire the control of his materials—to obtain the finest set of tools available for his work. Thirty years' experience has led me to divide students into, roughly speaking, three classes :—

Three classes of students

1. Those who have the musical gift without the mechanical cleverness.

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2. Those who have the mechanical instinct without the musical sense.
3. Those who have the two gifts combined with the gift for practising, *i.e.*, for analysing difficulties, and extracting the maximum benefit from the time and trouble they have given.

In the first class you find those pathetic cases who have the impulse to express themselves through the medium of a musical instrument, but who, owing to clumsiness of hand and finger, never acquire the neatness and facility necessary for their purpose.

In the second you find a finger cleverness which has its fascination quite apart from music. Such cases can develop into the gymnasts of the platform, or useful orchestral players.

Genius

Segregation of muscle

Economy

But in the third you have the student with the methodical brain which consciously or unconsciously tabulates the rules of technique; who recognises what he needs; organises his work so that no strength or time is wasted, and proceeds to use the tools he controls for the expression of the inward driving power. When you find musical instinct and finger cleverness, *plus* the methodical brain, you have the great artist—the perfect article. "Genius does what it must, while talent does what it can." A superficial knowledge of the muscular and nervous systems of the human body will make it clear to the student how important it is to use only such muscles as are necessary to the particular movement required at the moment, while leaving the others at rest. In this way the greatest result with the least output of muscular effort is achieved, the effect being that sense of ease, that absence of haste, which is essentially the hall mark of the artist.

Nerve force

The great need for the violinist is *nerve* force; far more so than mere muscular strength; the force which implies an alert brain and active will-power. There is a great tendency on the part of teachers and pupils to take more interest in one hand than another. How often one hears a brilliant left-hand technique ruined by a poor bowing technique—much oftener,

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indeed, than the reverse; and yet this is illogical enough, when one considers that the bow is to the violin what the breath is to the singer ; and just as a beautiful voice would be of little or no use to its owner without proper breath control, so the most perfect left hand is of little use to the violinist unless the bow can produce a pure and beautiful tone which will enable the audience to hear clearly the work of the fingers.

Bow = Breath

Teacher's duties

What, then, are the duties of a violin teacher ? What material has he to mould, and what is he going to make with it ?

Undoubtedly his aim should be to make his pupil independent of him. To establish the principles of music and technique so clearly and firmly that the pupil is able to work out his own salvation, with experience for a guide.

The teacher must make the pupil love his work so well that he counts no sacrifice too great to bring to it. Without this enthusiasm there will be no great artistic achievement. A student, to be really successful in public, must have for his equipment a love of beauty, in sound, colour and form ; a keen sense of proportion and fitness, an unerring instinct for true phrasing. He must know very definitely what he means to do with his future ; whether he is going to be an artist or merely a gymnast ; whether he intends to charm or astonish. He must possess an insatiable curiosity which makes him eager to know not only *what* he has to do, but *why* he must do it ; and it is the teacher's privilege to foster this curiosity by never telling him to do a thing without giving a reason for it, or, still better, by asking him to supply the reason.

I strongly advise every teacher to encourage his or her pupils to evolve their own short technical exercises, according to their special need at the moment.

The commonest weaknesses of pupils are, in my experience :—

Common fault

Poor bowing technique, caused almost invariably by reason of their greater interest in their left hand.

Lifting the fingers of the left hand in changing strings, thereby spoiling their legato.

Bad placing of the fingers, causing an impure tone.

The violin held too low, and too much movement of the body.

A bad vibrato, and over-use of it.

Bad change of position.

All these faults are easily cured if the pupil once realises the essential principles of technique and the reasons for their being essential.

Gift of diagnosis

Above all things, a teacher must have the gift of diagnosis and an intimate knowledge of human nature, if he is to bring out the best in each pupil.

He must foster originality by encouraging the student to analyse a difficulty, instead of first explaining it himself.

From these premisses it will be seen that the duties of a violin teacher are multitudinous. I will endeavour to tabulate them here, under various headings, and deal with each in its turn, with hints as to the best way of practising.

I.

THE ARTISTIC SIDE, comprising :—

1 The aim of music.
2 Beauty of sound.
3 Charm.
4 Right ideal.
5 Forming of character.
6 Imagination.
7 Inspiration
8 Individuality.
9 How to distinguish between liberty and licence.
10 Interpretation.
11 Balance.
12 Proportion.
13 Rubato and Rhythm.
14 Phrasing.
15 Expression.
16 Fitness.
17 Form.

II.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT, comprising :—

1 How to practise.
2 Concentration.
3 Position.
4 Freedom of movement.
5 Breathing.
6 Playing in tune.
7 Intonation.
8 Grammar of music.
9 Ear training.
10 Sight reading.
11 Time.
12 Rhythm.
13 Memory.

III.

TECHNIQUE, comprising :—

1 Artificial points in our work.
2 Connection between brain and fingers.
3 Muscular segregation.
4 Placing of fingers.
5 Duties of each finger and thumb.
6 Keeping fingers down, and grouping.
7 Extensions.
8 Passages.
9 Fingering.
10 Bowing.
11 Independence of the hands.

IV.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE necessary to a violinist of (1) the violin, (2) the bow and strings, and (3) how to select and preserve them.

V.

MAXIMS, a summary of the most important points in a violinist's make-up.

I.

THE ARTISTIC SIDE.

What is music? **Creating**

The aim of music. What *is* music ? A means of expressing not only oneself, but the national thought through the medium of sound. The strongest driving force in human nature is the desire to create—to make something which is one's very own. Unless music is used as a means of expression, it is merely empty sound.

Beauty

The justification of music is its beauty—beauty of tone, form, colour. Whether it be speaking of peace or storm, love or hate, beauty must be there.

Charm

Charm—one of those elusive qualities, so difficult to define in words, so easy to recognise when met. A magic in the heart, conveyed to the fingers, producing a tone which can no more be taught than the power of attraction which is given to some and denied to many.

Right ideals

Here the teacher can only give the right ideal and train the student to recognise charm when he hears it.

Character

The character has everything to say in such matters. Few instruments betray the character of the pupil so readily as the violin, and the more musical he is, the more his character shows itself.

Sincerity

If he is sincere in his music, he will convince his audience, even if his interpretation be different from the generally accepted one. If he copies someone else, or plays in the style he thinks the audience likes to hear, he will leave that audience unmoved. A teacher can do more than anyone to mould the character of the pupil, and yet the latter must be left with his own independent individuality.

Imagination

Imagination—the gift of making mental images. This is often conspicuous by its absence; generally because of our national shyness of discussing or showing emotion. All children have imagination, and only as they grow up does it become obscured.

They are told not to "romance." Later on they learn that it is not "good form" to show their feelings. This is death to music as an art. The imagination must be encouraged—every phrase must mean something, either rhythmically, dramatically or melodically.

Inspiration

And with the growth of imagination comes the vision, the inspiration—the breathing in—of a new idea, which is often given out spontaneously before one knows it is there.

Individuality

Individuality ; an individable one—a being who is himself ; no copy of a teacher ; one who, having assimilated all the things which make him a master of his means, steps out into the world self-reliant and able to express the best that is in him.

Liberty versus Licence

As a preparation for this independence, he must be taught to distinguish between liberty and licence ; for the step from guidance to freedom is a critical one.

Interpretation

Take, for instance, the question of interpretation. As in speech there may be two or more ways of phrasing and emphasising, so there are different ways of interpreting a musical phrase, and yet each may be right, as long as the performer sincerely feels it that way. And yet there are certain laws which may not be transgressed.

Balance

Balance must be kept. If in rubato a part of the phrase is hastened, another part must be spread out (or *vice versâ*), so that the whole phrase occupies the same length of time as if each bar has been played in strict time.

Rubato

Proportion Gradation

In other words, if you "rob" one part of a phrase of some of its time by hastening, you must pay back what you stole to another part of the phrase. There must always be strict balance. Rallentando and accelerando, diminuendo and crescendo must be *gradual*, each note increasing or decreasing in time or tone, in proportion to its predecessor. Pauses are greatly sinned against, often being made an excuse for a complete standstill, whereas both "rallentando" and "a tempo" and a pause and "a tempo" should be like the stretching and relaxing of a piece of elastic. A sense of proportion is the artist's most valuable possession. There must be proportion in time-values, in tone-gradation, in phrasing ; and not only in these details, but there must be perfect proportion in their relation to the composition as a whole. When this is accomplished, we have that mysterious and enchanting thing called style.

Phrasing In phrasing, the *shape* must be decided upon. That is, the phrase must be built up to its most important point or climax, so as to secure continuity of outline.

Expression To do this, the expression marks provided by the composer must be examined carefully as indications of his meaning. After that, the natural expression of the individual can be added, always keeping in mind what is "fitting."

Style Styles must not be mixed. You cannot play Bach like a Hungarian Dance, or Beethoven with Vieuxtemps' fingering and a "cinema" vibrato.

Musical form A student should be familiar with the rules of musical form, so that he can analyse a composition.

II.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT.

Practice How to practise. Of all the things a teacher has to impart to his pupils, this is the most valuable. Without the knowledge of how to pick a difficulty to pieces, not only is time wasted, but wrong habits are so firmly fixed that it takes a lifetime to eradicate them.

Independence of fingers First, you must know *what* you want to do, then *why*, and thirdly, *how*. Violinists have only four fingers and a thumb on each hand with which to achieve the thousands of intricate movements required, so that the first important thing to be done is to make each finger and thumb independent and strong. Intense concentration of thought is necessary for this, for it is nerve force far more than muscular strength that is needed. **Brain control** The brain must guide each movement, first consciously, then, when the right

Breathing

Posture

Relaxation

habit is established, it becomes sub-conscious. There must be perfect intimacy between the brain and fingers and thumbs. The arms and wrists are merely links. There must be freedom of movement in every joint, but not *looseness*. If there is to be this freedom of movement, then the breathing must be equally free. One of the commonest faults of a badly trained violinist is the holding of the breath, especially when wrestling with some difficulty. I notice this especially in those who stand with the violin held low, with a cramped right arm. The chest should be well raised. The ideal position of the body is a natural, erect attitude. If this is insisted upon, there should be no cases of crooked backs or neuritis. The tone of the violin is frequently muffled by the unnecessary pressure of the shoulder and chin, used by the performer for the purpose of steadying the instrument. This prevents the body of the violin from vibrating freely, and checks its resonance. Hold the violin so that the scroll is on a higher level than the chinrest, and lean slightly to the left, so that the left shoulder-blade is flat. The violin will then swing quite naturally away from the first finger of the left hand, leaving it free, and the elbow will fall into its right position under the violin without effort. Play a few notes in one position, supporting the neck of the violin with the thumb, and touching the body of the violin with neither shoulder nor chin. The scroll being higher than the chinrest, the violin will of its own accord slide downwards against the neck of the player. If the notes be played by the fingers *only*, the violin will remain quietly resting on the thumb, and against the neck of the player, without oscillating. Then play an arpeggio from the third to the seventh position and back again, in the same attitude, without moving the left arm. Now place the first finger in the third position, let the thumb glide lightly down to the first position, and follow it with the first finger, without pressure, remembering that the hand is travelling *upwards* towards the scroll, and not in a downward direction. Use this exercise for each finger in turn. Then practise arpeggi or other passages in three or four octaves in the same attitude. The student will find that after a few days not only has the violin gained greatly in resonance, but that he can hear his results more clearly. After he has accustomed himself to using only enough pressure to prevent the violin from rocking, he will, of his own accord, grip the violin only when necessary, leaving it entirely free in Cantilena. By assuming this posture the centre of gravity is now on the left side, thus leaving the bow arm free and light. The only artificial position required of a violinist is that of the left elbow and forearm. Many find it an effort to bring the elbow sufficiently forward across the body, and to turn the forearm so that the fourth finger is brought over the G string. This difficulty is usually due to a want of elasticity in certain muscles and joints, and can be dealt with by simple exercises. To take the upper arm first : hold the left elbow in the right hand, and while keeping the left hand well on the left side of the body, *i.e.*, where it would be when playing in the first position, with the fourth finger on the G string, pull with the right hand until the left elbow is as far as it will come without pain. Keep it there for a few moments, and relax gently. Repeat this a dozen times several times a day. Gentle rotatory exercises will help to secure a freer movement of the superior radio-ulnar joint, but these exercises should be done at first under the guidance of a teacher, to avoid the possibility of a strain.

Left elbow

Tune

Playing out of tune is one of our nightmares, and is almost invariably caused by not habitually keeping the fingers down.

Intonation

Bad intonation, which is not quite the same thing as playing out of tune, is often confounded with it. Bad intonation is more subtle, and more difficult to cure. "Intonation" means giving the true significance of each note according to its relation to the tonic. For instance, take the pure scale in a major key. The tonic, mediant and dominant are stationary in character ; the sub-dominant and sub-mediant are falling, while the super-tonic and leading note are rising. So that D in C major is slightly sharper as

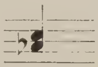
Pure scale

the super-tonic than it would be as the key-note of D; flatter as the sub-mediant of F, and considerably sharper as the seventh note of E flat, and so on.

Grammar of music

For this reason alone, if for no other, a knowledge of the grammar of music and of modulation is indispensable for a violinist.

Sight-reading

For sight-reading, an intimate knowledge of the intervals is of the utmost importance. We tune in perfect fifths, and every other interval we play is either more or less than a fifth. If the interval be a tone and a half more than a fifth, the fingers used are *that distance apart*. If the interval be two and a half tones less than a fifth, the fingers used are two and a half tones apart. This only applies when *two* strings are used. So that when playing  the distance from the fourth finger to the second is a tone and a half. (See No. 46, Section III., in the book of examples and analysis.)

Ear training

The ear must not only be trained, but kept sensitive by daily exercises specially adapted for this purpose. Our ears are our most valuable asset, and, like all delicate tools, very easily blunted. A musician has to "see with his ears and hear with his eyes," which means that what he hears he must be able to visualise as written on paper, and what he sees on paper he must mentally hear. In other words, his ears must anticipate what his fingers are required to play.

Time

Time should present no difficulties to a properly trained student of music. The continental method is easier than our own, as the notes are named according to their fractional values (crotchet=$\frac{1}{4}$; quaver=$\frac{1}{8}$, etc.), and the only knowledge necessary is simple division.

Rhythm

What is the difference between time and rhythm? Time is the mathematical value of notes, the division of bars into beats, while rhythm is the movement *in between the beats*. A common rhythmical fault is the shortening of the last beat of a bar. The last beat extends to the first beat of the next bar, and its duration is the same as that of the first beat which extends to the second. Each note contains two lesser ones, *i.e.*, a crotchet contains two quavers, a quaver two semiquavers, and so on. The feeling of the second half of a note is an essential part of a sense of rhythm. If you watch a man who walks well, you will see that at the moment of touching the ground with one foot, the rear foot leaves the ground and swings evenly forward to the next step. This swing is the rhythm, while the placing of the foot is the time. Rhythm moves inexorably forward, while time is vertical. A conductor illustrates this when, directly after a beat, he moves his hand on its way to the next, arriving there with a click at the exact moment.

Legato

To achieve a perfect legato, you cannot do better than follow the example of a good singer. When he sings a scale on any vowel sound, you will notice that the steady pressure behind the voice causes the tone to *go through*, as the pitch alters from one note to another. Then hear him sing the same scale with words containing consonants. He will defer the consonant to the very last moment, and then give it so swiftly that there is no perceptible interruption to the tone, as the pitch alters. This gives what one may call a "straight line" in sound, though there is a "curve" in pitch. In true legato singing the final consonant is treated as belonging to the following word, whether that word begins with a vowel or a consonant. Though this looks monstrous on paper, it is the main rule of the "straight line." Not only does it ensure continuous tone, but it gives, by pushing on from one note to another, an impulse to rhythm which can be got in no other way. Now compare these examples of singing technique with the process of producing legato on the violin. The bow has to maintain the steadiness of tone (the breath-pressure), while the notes change their pitch. Whether you play your scale in one bow or several bows, whether you play it in one position or more, on one string or several, the "straight line" of sound must continue right through. Your consonants are made by the lift or fall of the fingers, and for the same reason for which a singer brings his consonant at the last moment, the movement of your finger must be made with such lightning rapidity, that the tone carries through to the next note, without any perceptible interruption and with the sensation of continuously "pushing on" the rhythm.

Memory

How to train the memory. There are two sorts of memory ; one is visual, the other auditory. Both can be acquired by the right method of practising. If a pupil looks at a phrase or passage, notes the keys, time-division, fingering and bowing, *before* playing it, and then looks away, he will find that after a few attempts he can see the whole thing before him. Then let him play it very slowly, now and then comparing what he is playing with the printed music. In this way even a defective memory can be trained into a serviceable one. The auditory memory is a natural gift, but the student should be on his guard against inaccuracy.

III.

TECHNIQUE.

Technique

Webster defines technique as "the method of performance of any art," and "pertinent to the arts." Now method means an ordinary process. So that at the root of technique lies the necessity of order, an established rule of procedure, which will ensure the certainty of a desired result, a complete control over the tools with which the artist is to effect that result. Without perfect control, there will necessarily be effort, and effort is opposed to true art.

Tools

Now what are the tools we have to use ? These are our fingers and thumbs, each divided into three controllable parts—arms consisting of two parts, and wrists ; the grip of the jaw and shoulder for steadying the violin, and the true balance of the body, with a firm grip of the feet on the ground. Of all these tools, and of all the things we require them to do, only one of them is against nature in its application, and that is the arbitrary position of the left elbow and forearm, which I have described elsewhere. Otherwise all the

Economy

attitudes and movements are natural. To secure the maximum result with the minimum output of effort, we have to learn the art of using only those muscles needed at the moment, segregating the rest. To do this there must be perfect intimacy between brain and fingers. Once this is established, it is easy enough to use the arms merely as mediums or servants to the fingers.

Placing of fingers

The placing of each finger should be carefully watched, the pad covering both sides of the string equally. When the fingers have acquired the ideal position, the hand and thumb will fall into line quite naturally. The action of the fingers must invariably be lightning-quick, both in the lift and fall. In rapid passages, where the chief aim is to make the notes sound separated, as on a piano, the action must be crisp but light, whereas in cantilena the pressure should be intense and sustained, so as to cause each note to sing into the next, but in neither case may there be any strength used, except from the finger itself.

Pressures

Change of position

When moving from the first to the third position, the thumb should move smoothly up to the curve of the neck where it joins the violin, keeping a vertical position. The hand should not touch the violin in the third position, as that cramps the fingers. In changing from the third to the first position, the thumb must glide down *before* the finger, leaving the latter to follow with a quick, light movement. This necessitates the hand slightly following the thumb, previous to the finger movement. Care must be taken that the finger pad retain its hold on its note. In changing position and bow at the same time, you often hear the note before the change repeated by the bow. If the change is made in the last stroke before the left hand moves, arriving on the new note at the moment of changing the bow, this fault will be avoided, and a neat join between the two notes effected.

Thumb

The thumb should be in such a position as to respond upwards on the neck of the violin to the downward pressure of each finger, and it should be in such a position that the third and fourth fingers derive support from it.

Legato fingering

The fingers of the left hand should be kept down as much as possible, more especially when changing from one string to another, or to another position. Keeping the last finger down till the note on the new string is established has several important advantages :—

1 The habit of measuring, which gives security of intonation.
2 The fingers learn to move independently of each other.
3 A good legato.
4 The habit of double-stopping.
5 The increase of tone-volume, owing to the sympathetic vibration of the note held down.
6 Greater velocity, because of the economy of effort.

Extensions

Difficulty is often felt in extensions, owing to a mistaken idea of the position of the hand. In extending for tenths, for instance, once the fourth finger is straight, there can be but little further stretch with it. The hand must be brought to the position of the fourth finger note, and the extension made downwards with the first. This necessitates the root of the first finger being very flexible. Indeed, the flexibility of this joint should be treated as a matter of great importance. Practise holding all awkward stretches in position for a few seconds, without using the bow. At the end of that time the resistance felt in the hand will relax, and the fingers will feel their respective notes under them. To "get to" them by brute force deadens the sense of touch, and conveys a sound of impurity to the tone. I advocate the constant silent practice of grouping, so that the mind is wholly concentrated on the sense of touch in the fingers.

Grouping

Whenever it is possible, the fingers should be grouped in their intervals belonging to the key and position they are playing in. For example, take the notes on the A string in the third position. If the passage is descending, and the key is G major, the fingers will fall with the semitone between the third and fourth fingers. If G minor, harmonic form, the semitone will remain, but the first and second fingers will have only a semitone between them, while the third and second will be playing an augmented second. It is of the utmost importance that the fingers should have the power to arrange themselves in these various intervals *before they fall on the string*, as it ensures clear intonation and evenness of execution. I look upon these two rules for legato fingering as the secret of a perfectly sure left-hand technique.

Scales

Do not practise scales only once in the twenty-four hours, but rather three or four times, as in practice *habit* is of great importance, and if you work at your scales once a day, there is time, in the intervening twenty-two or twenty-three hours, for your muscles to forget what you have taught them, and for the mental impression to fade.

The beauty of a scale consists in the perfect equality of its note-values and smoothness of tone. The chief difficulties of a scale lie in its three changes, *i.e.*, change of bow, string, and position. These three changes must be inaudible to the keenest ear. Practise scales with the metronome at ♩ = 60, first in minims, then crotchets, quavers, quaver-triplets, semiquavers, semiquaver-triplets, and demisemiquavers, always taking the value of four crotchets to the bow. In this way each finger is responsible for an emphasis in turn, and you teach them control and rhythm. Scales should also be practised with various fingerings, bowings, rhythms, accents and nuances. I advise the following system of daily scale practice :—

G major and both minors in three and four octaves.

G major and minors in thirds.
,, ,, sixths.
,, ,, octaves.
,, ,, fingered octaves.
,, ,, tenths.
,, ,, harmonics.

G in chromatics.

G in fingered chromatics.

Arpeggi : G minor common chord.
G major ,, ,,
1st inversion of E minor.
2nd ,, ,, C major.
2nd ,, ,, C minor.
1st inversion diminished 7th of F minor.
1st ,, dominant 7th of A flat minor.

When these run smoothly, practise the same series of scales and arpeggi, beginning on A flat, later on taking A natural, and so on. When playing the last of the series on A flat, the chord must be enharmonically changed to the first inversion of the dominant of A minor, the A flat then becoming G sharp. In these arpeggi, notice that if you use the first finger for the beginning note each time, the common chord fingering will be 1, 3, 1, with the first finger always crossing to a perfect fifth. In the first inversion you have 1, 3, 2, with each finger a whole tone apart. The second inversion in minor gives you 1, 4, 2, with the first and second fingers a semitone apart, whereas in the major second inversion they are a whole tone apart. The diminished seventh is fingered 1, 3, 1, 2, with the first finger crossing to a diminished fifth, and the second a semitone from the third ; whereas in the dominant seventh, 1, 3, 1, 2, the first still takes a diminished fifth, while the second is a whole tone from the third.

I lay stress on these distances, as it establishes a habit of both thinking and playing in chords, instead of in separate notes.

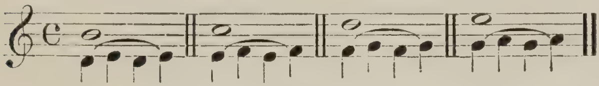
The principal points for practising double-stopping scales are :—

Thirds

In thirds, in changing from the first to the third position, carry the fingers last used into the third position to prepare for the fingers you intend to use there. This makes a smooth join between the positions. The same rule applies in changing from the third to the first position.

Sixths

In sixths, the peculiarity lies in the fact that the fingers have to cross the strings in fifths, *e.g.*, in the scale of G the third finger takes C after playing G, the first crosses from B to E, and so on. To secure a legato effect, the crossing finger may not jump, but must glide. The following preparatory exercise should be studied :—



The smoothness of the effect depends upon the placing of the finger which takes the fifth, and can only be achieved if it be near enough to the next string to allow the pressure backwards or forwards to bend or straighten the top joint so as to cover or release the string. This is an exception to the rule for the placing of the fingers. In the above example, first bar, the first finger, in playing B, must already be nearly touching the D string, in readiness to press forward for the note E, and so on.

Octaves

In octaves, the first finger is the guide, and the bow should at first give the lower notes only, while the left hand plays both, the movement from octave to octave being made with lightning rapidity. Where there is a whole tone in the scale, the movement is made from the forearm, but where a semitone occurs, only the fingers or wrist should move.

In fingered octaves and in all technical feats which require much stretching, care must be taken to make easy preparatory exercises, and not to practise them for more than a few minutes consecutively.

Tenths

In tenths, keep the hand in the position of the *upper* note, making all the extensions downwards with the first finger.

Practise the tenths broken, so as to ensure the whole and half tones being clearly defined. The position of the thumb is important in tenths, and the student should ascertain for himself which position gives him the greatest ease.

Harmonics

Where the first finger is used, let the pressure be firm but not heavy, while the fourth is light. Practise harmonic scales broken so as to establish the habit of gauging a perfect fourth. Cover the string well with the upper finger, and experiment how much pressure the string will bear from it without destroying the purity of the harmonic. Take care that the bow cuts the right spot of the string.

When a harmonic is to be played after a stopped note, necessitating a change of position, the string must be pressed down on the fingerboard until the harmonic is reached. Otherwise the two notes do not join smoothly. Also, if the pressure is released too soon, other harmonics will sound before the desired one is reached.

Fingered chromatic

Wherever it is possible to use a finger for each note it is well to do so, as it gives greater crispness. The fall of a finger must necessarily separate the notes more clearly than the glide of a finger from one note to another.

Passages

Fingering

In arpeggi, in fact in all passages, there must be no glissando. All changes of position must be quick and crisp, so that the notes are as separate as they would be on a piano. *Fingering* is a science in itself, and can only be acquired by experience. In passages it should be as simple as possible, and as a rule with the fewest possible changes of position—but this must always depend upon the hand of the player. For cantilena one has to consider the shape of the phrase, the tone-colour required, the idiosyncrasies of the violin used, the character of each string, etc.

Vibrato

To acquire a vibrato which can be controlled, and made at any pace and any size desired, put the violin under the right arm, with the left hand on the fingerboard in the position of playing on the A string. Bring the knuckles of the right hand up against the left forearm, in front of the wrist and slightly below it, and placing the third finger of the left hand lightly on the string, let the hand oscillate very slightly from the wrist, with no movement of the arm. When this can be done without difficulty, vary the size and pace of the movement. Take care that the movement of the hand is backwards and forwards, and not sideways. Exercise each finger in the same way.

Bowing

I have already spoken of the importance of the technique of bowing. It cannot be over-emphasised. Upon the bow depends the *dramatic* life of the violin. The left hand is practically limited to four ways of expressing emotion—the class of vibrato, the slide, the sort of fingering, and the string used ; but the bow is responsible for the innumerable gradations of tone and moods required by the music. Let us consider the material we have to use, and how it has to be used. A stick, 29 inches in length, its weight approximately 2 ounces, and of great elasticity. Fixed to this are some 160 hairs, also elastic, and with a rough surface to cause friction.

Grasp the stick of the bow in the middle and it feels a featherweight ; grasp it at one end, and the other seems, to the unpractised hand, to have suddenly become top-heavy. Now this bow has to perform thousands of the most intricate and delicate movements, varying its pace and pressure every moment. Obviously the first thing to do is to obtain control over the end of the stick which is not in the hand. To do this, a firm, flexible grasp is necessary, with perfectly elastic arm, wrist and fingers. Nothing may be rigid, nothing loose. How can this be done ? Try grasping anything with your fingers only, leaving the arm and wrist unaffected. At first the effort of the fingers will tighten up the muscles of the arm and wrist, but gradually you find that the brain sorts out the muscles required, leaving the others relaxed. Roughly speaking, the middle finger and thumb carry the bow, the first and third fingers balance it, while the fourth finger acts as steersman. The middle joint of the thumb must be flexible, and constantly responding to the work of the fingers on the bow, in the same way as it works in sympathy with them when writing with a pen or pencil.

Elbow level

The level of the right elbow is important, and depends largely upon the angle at which the violin is held. If the teacher insists upon a low elbow, the violin will be held low to allow the bow to find the level of the strings. I strongly advocate the violin being held with its strings in a horizontal position, because the bow then cuts vertically, giving a clean, incisive tone, and because the violin has greater resonance when held high. The elbow will then be free from the body, without being unduly high. In my youth I was made to practise with a book held between my upper arm and body. Let the reader try to perform the most ordinary tasks of every-day life under similar circumstances, and he will be convinced of the futility of the proceeding. The bow must *cut*, not press, for pure tone is chiefly produced by friction and suction. To do this, the fingers must guide and manipulate the bow, while the arm is merely an elastic and incessantly moving medium between the brain and fingers. It is essential that the bow should move at a right angle to the string, and the hair cut at the exact distance from the bridge necessary to obtain the effect desired. For example, the more cut required, the nearer to the bridge should the bow be, as the string is capable of greater resistance there than near the fingerboard. To obtain an inaudible change at either the nut or point, the movement of the wrist should be as small as possible, and neither the pace nor the pressure of the bow must be altered between the strokes. To ensure this, the grasp of the fingers at the moment of changing must not be relaxed, in spite of their remaining flexible. The thumb is an important factor in all movements of the bow, and must be sympathetic to every mood of the fingers. The "upper half" (elbow to finger tips) in a normal arm is in reality longer than the "lower half" (shoulder to elbow) by some inches, and this is an advantage, as the lower half is the heaviest and slowest in movement.

Change of bow

Change of string

There are two ways of changing from one string to another: either by changing the level of the whole arm, or by bending the wrist so as to raise or lower the hand, according to the string the hair is to rest on. Now if it be a fact that true art obtains the maximum result with the minimum effort, then to use the wrist without the arm, or *vice versâ*, is better art than using both. For example, in playing the scale of G in the first position, the change of string between C and the open D string should be effected by lowering the elbow to the level of that string. But if a broken chord is to be played, where there is a change from one string to another and back again, then rather than use the heavier tool, let the hand take charge of the change and effect it by a small easy movement from the wrist.

In all changes, it is essential that the movement of the bow in the up or down stroke should not be interrupted by the change of the level of the elbow or the movement of the wrist.

Pianissimo practice

At least half of a student's work should be done with a piano or pianissimo tone. It is far more difficult to produce a pure, clean tone in pianissimo than in forte, and in moments of nervousness on a platform, the steadiness of hand which this habit has given him enables him to control the tone automatically. Also in practising with full energy in the left fingers, while the bow produces a pianissimo, you establish independence of action in the two hands. Strive always for beauty and charm of tone, and the volume will take care of itself. There is often a tendency to use only half the hairs of the bow. The fuller the number you use, the fresher the tone will be. One of the most difficult things to acquire, if there has been bad teaching at the beginning, is the right pace of the bow. To judge exactly how fast the bow should travel for the number of beats and notes and for the pressure required is an art in itself. Under no circumstance may the pressure of the bow upon the string be a dead weight, so as to produce a sound of tightening the string or sharpening the pitch. This sort of pressure affects the tone exactly in the same way as pulling or pushing the string out of its line with the left-hand fingers. It must be remembered that it is no slight task, to be required to draw a stick, 29 inches long, held by one extremity, to the full extent of the arm's length, without altering the plane on which it is travelling. Try hanging a long piece of wood, horizontally, at the same distance from your face as the violin bridge would be, and then draw your bow along it, just *not* touching it.

Beauty of tone

Pace of bow

Pressure

Attack

For a crisp attack, the pace of the bow must be in proportion to the impact. If the left fingers be firm enough, if the bow cuts the right spot of the string, vertically and at a right angle, and if the pace be swift enough and the fingers and wrist elastic, the attack can be made safely with almost unlimited force.

Tone-qualities

In speaking of the different tone-qualities, we use the word "colour." In the same way that blue can have a variety of shades varying from a preponderance of red to one of green, or green can melt gradually from blue-green to yellow-green, so in music you can produce a loud or a soft tone of different character. We have various means at our disposal for doing this. The pace of the bow, its pressure, the distance of the hair from the bridge, the amount of hair used, the grasp of the bow, the manipulation of the stick by the fingers and thumb, the placing of the left fingers, their pressure, the class of vibrato used—all these things affect the tone-quality. To this one may add the effect of the vibrato on the tone, which can be varied according to the dimension and speed of the vibrato, and the use of the arm or wrist for its production.

Pizzicato

Pizzicato is capable of many shades of tone :—

1 According to the position of the finger plucking the string, *i.e.*, nearer to or further from the bridge.
2 The part of the finger used, *i.e.*, cushion or tip.
3 The resistance or elasticity of the finger.

To produce a soft, velvety effect, the finger should slide slightly down the string in the act of plucking.

Varieties of bowing

Legato means "connected" ; that is, that each note must sing *into* the next. Now whether the notes be taken in one bow, or in separate strokes, the effect must be the same. The essential points are :—

1 To keep the pressure of the last finger used in the left hand firm until the next note is

established. The slightest relaxation of pressure will cause a diminution of vibration.

2 To keep the bow moving uninterruptedly during the change of note.

Martelé, or Hammered

The important point here is the pace of the bow, which is more important than the pressure ; and the cleanness of the silence between the strokes. The grasp on the stick must not alter or relax during the silence.

Piqué, or Pinched

The stick must dip, and the hair grip the string *before* the stroke. At the moment of movement a slight release of pressure gives the sound of the pinch.

Staccato

For firm staccato, make a preparatory exercise to strengthen the muscle between the thumb and first finger. Place the bow on the string at the point, raise all the fingers except the first, which must be straight and rigid, well to the left of the thumb. Press up strongly with the thumb, resisting downwards with the first finger, until the stick touches the hair. Now release till the bow lies lightly on the string again. Practise this without drawing the bow, *i.e.*, silently. When this exercise has become easy, make a series of these upward pressures of the thumb, slightly moving the bow and making as many pressures to the half bow as possible. There must be no movement from the hand, wrist, or arm other than what is necessary for the travelling of the bow. This is a preliminary exercise for giving the proper movement to the thumb. Now make a series of *pushes* up to the nut, without the stick dipping up and down, or trembling. The movement comes from the forearm, and not from the wrist. Practise the same thing downstroke in a series of *pulls*. This must be practised piano, and with a pleasant quality of tone.

Flying staccato

For this, the third finger is used for balancing the bow, while the first finger helps to lift, while the arm pushes the bow across the strings in a continuous movement.

Spiccato

Every bow has its own favourite spot for this bowing, according to the speed required. Broadly speaking, the medium speed will be found near the middle, while the fast spiccato is nearer the point, and the slow, heavy spiccato is near the nut. Practise spiccato first legato détaché, using about three inches of hair, near the middle, with no movement of the upper arm, but with a slight movement of the forearm and wrist, guiding the angle of the bow by manipulation with the fingers and thumb. By degrees increase the speed, and experiment, *while moving the bow,* until you find the spot where the stick tries to spring of its own accord. The best tone-quality is obtained when the elasticity of bow, hair, and string combined give the effect of springing without the hair actually leaving the string. The slow spiccato near the nut requires more help from the fingers, as the bow is more reluctant to spring.

Saltato

If the bow is allowed to drop on the string, with full hair and a very loose grasp (begin with only the first finger and thumb, the other fingers releasing the stick at the moment of letting it drop), and the arm makes a slow downstroke, it will be found that the bow makes a series of staccato notes. Let it bounce twice, then make an upstroke by a sharp pressure of the third and fourth fingers. Then let it bounce three, four, six, eight, and twelve times respectively. When these can be done with certainty and clearly, practise the same with simple scales and passages. This must also be practised upstroke.

Flautato

Practise this first with the bow near the fingerboard, the first finger well round the stick, and carrying it, and using but few hairs. The grasp must be light and flexible, with a floating movement of the arm from nut to point, and *vice versâ.*

By degrees bring the bow near the bridge till the tone assumes the character of a harmonic.

Portamento

The bow must move incessantly, while the fingers and wrist release the hair from the string only as much as is necessary to make a slight break of tone between the notes. In portamento the silence is as short and the note as long as possible, while in staccato the note is as short and the silence as long as possible.

IV.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE VIOLIN.

I hold that every specialist should know the strength and limitation of the tools with which he carries on his life's work. It is not unusual to find a good violinist with little or no knowledge of how to preserve the varnish of his violin; whether the bridge is well cut and fitted, whether it is the right height, arch, thickness, or hardness; or whether the soundpost is properly adjusted. Nor does such a one know whether the gauge is correct or what sort of strings suit his violin. He does not know how to select a sound violin, or its market value. The knowledge, too, of how to select a bow is all important to him. A bow may be a very fine one, and yet not suit his hand. He must also know whether it is well haired and with hair of good quality.

He must know how to choose strings; first, for their quality; secondly, in relation to the violin he is using at the time. Finally, he must know how to keep them from deteriorating between the time of purchase and use. All these things should be taught at an early stage.

V.

MAXIMS.

Right Arm and Hand.

Everyone must more or less experiment for himself until he finds the particular position of arm, fingers, and wrist which gives him the most complete control over the stick from end to end. No two hands are alike, and, moreover, each new effect requires a special grasp.

The first finger must be able to press or lift the stick at will. In order to do this, it must find a position independent of the others. These must be as sensitive in their work on the bow as the foot of a skilled pianist on the pedal, in order to give variety of quantity and quality of tone. The thumb must be in perfect sympathy with the fingers, responding to their every movement and pressure. Do not tie yourself down to an exact point of contact with the bow for each finger, as it results in stiffness and monotony.

If the fourth finger be too short to keep it on the stick at the point without an effort, let it come off, but keep it as close to the third finger as possible, and let it return to the stick in the upstroke. To insist upon keeping it when too short on the stick at the point is apt to prevent a free extension of the forearm.

Keep the middle joint of the thumb slightly bent, so that it is constantly moving in response to the fingers, in the same way that it moves when writing.

Never press at the nut. The weight of the bow, and arm, and the close packing of the hair combined give sufficient force.

When changing string, keep the bow as near as possible to both strings, *i.e.*, make the movement of the arm or wrist as small as possible. When changing rapidly backwards or forwards on two neighbouring strings, keep the arm at the level of the higher pitched string, and make all the small movements upwards, producing the tone on the lower one from the upward pressure of the thumb. The reason of this is that the upward movement of the hand is the easiest, and brings the full breadth of the hair on to the strings.

Do not let the bow be disturbed by difficulties in the left hand, or make accents which do not belong to the music.

Do not mark a change of position with the bow.

Practise all difficult left-hand technique pianissimo.

Tone must always remain beautiful, with a sound of air in it. A pressed or stuffy tone does not carry far.

Take care that the weight of the bow at the nut is carried lightly by hand and arm. You must not *lean* upon the bow. Wrist and finger pressure make up for the want of weight at the point.

What you do with the bow when you lift it *off* the strings is just as important as what you do with it when it is on them.

Do not let the upstroke be lighter than the down-stroke, unless the music calls for it. Remember that the French terms "tiré" and "poussé" mean "pulled" and "pushed." These words exactly express the action of the arm.

Keep the bow always as near the bridge as possible for the tone required. The right shoulder must not come forward, but the elbow must remain free.

In all light bowings, such as spiccato, saltato, staccato, keep the left-finger work specially firm, as this encourages the strings to respond quickly.

The pressure of the left fingers should always be greater than that of the bow. The resulting free vibration of the string gives a singing quality to the tone. Never try for a big tone. If it be beautiful in quality, the quantity will take care of itself. Anyone of average strength could have a big tone if it were merely a question of muscle, but tone lies in nerve force.

In wrist movements keep the arm free, and in arm strokes keep the wrist free. Do not try to acquire a loose wrist by keeping the arm rigid.

Do not press on a high note, *i.e.*, when the vibrating length of string is very short. Use intense pressure of the left finger, with a full vibrato, and draw the bow freely. All this helps the short length of string to vibrate.

Practise making your gradations of tone with the *bow*, and do not depend upon slides and vibrato for warmth of expression.

Left Hand.

If in pizzicato you pluck the open string, it continues to vibrate for a longer period than if you pluck a note which you stop with a finger. This is because the vibrating length of string is cut off by the bridge at one end and by the nut at the other, both being made of ultra-hard wood. If the fingers could be made as hard and strong as that wood, all notes would ring like the open strings.

Abnormal strength of the fingers is a necessity of a violinist, and this must be acquired by special training.

It is, however, not only strength which is required. but energy. It is the latter which gives individuality of style. Train any weak finger up to the standard of the strongest. Do not avoid using it. Never lose touch with your fingerboard if possible, or you lose your sense of distance. Fingers should have eyes in their tips.

Make your semitones small. They give the character to the key.

When changing position, the finger with which the change is to be made must keep the string firmly on the fingerboard until the new note is reached, as any relaxation of pressure causes a break of tone-purity between the two notes.

In making a change upwards from one position to another, extend the finger which is to take the top note and let it fall vertically on the string after the hand is stationary. The extension of the finger shortens the journey, strengthens the finger, and gives an accurate aim.

Vibrato must always be in keeping with the emotion of the music at the moment. Take care that the vibrato does not move the violin itself. That affects the tone adversely.

Take care that the left hand is firm before the bow attacks.

In passages take the simplest fingering and fewest changes of position.

What you do with your fingers when they are lifted *off* the strings is just as important as what you do with them when they are *on* them.

GENERAL MAXIMS.

Do not hold your breath during difficulties.

Always practise in strict rhythm. Make your movement at the right moment. Make it a matter of life and death to arrive neither before nor after, but *on* the beat. Do not press on the back of the violin more than you need. It is your sound-board, and the less the cushion or coat-collar covers it, the freer the tone will be.

Practise slowly, think fast. The brain commands, the fingers obey, the ear criticises.

Do not play a thing till you know what to listen for.

When practising, do not leave a note till it rings clearly.

Practise scales and arpeggi every day. They are the foundation of technique and the key to sight-reading.

Expression marks have nothing to do with tempo or rhythm. The difficulty of expression must not affect either of the latter.

Be punctual with your expression marks.

The audience do not care whether a thing be difficult or easy ; they only want it to be beautiful. Do not show that anything is difficult.

Stand naturally, with chest up and violin high. It gives your audience confidence in you.

The violin is meant to be played on, not worked on.

Do not do anything merely for show. Let everything you do have its artistic justification.

To omit an accent in music is to replace a strong word with a weak one in speech.

Do not play passages like *Etudes*, but give them shape and emphasis.

Never be uninteresting.

Be sure of what emotion you want to express, and make it unmistakable.

Take care that your audience mentally *sees* what you are playing.

Do not make a glissando between two phrases. It makes a join where there should be a comma.

When a phrase ends with two slurred notes, let the last be lighter than the first.

Finish on the chief note of a shake before proceeding to the next, so as to let the melody stand out clearly.

When playing with a piano or orchestra, listen carefully to the pitch.

All ornamentations must be in keeping with the character of the music in which they occur.

Do not use less bow for less tone. A free bow in pianissimo gives a carrying tone.

Do not hurry. Speed does not mean haste.

When making an accent, do not depress the violin, but rather lift it to meet the impact of the bow.

Give importance to accidentals which modulate to another key.

Above all things, let your music be the sincere expression of yourself, and not an imitation of someone else.

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